

Melford  
Near Collington, Prince Georges County  
Maryland

HABS MD-627

HABS  
MD.

17-COLTO.V

6.

PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA  
District of Washington, D. C.

Historic American Buildings Survey  
Delos H. Smith, District Officer  
1707 Eye Street, N.W., Washington, D.C.

MELFORD  
(Thomas Duckett House)  
(Slingluff House)  
5103 Crain Highway  
Mitchellville  
Prince George's County  
Maryland

HABSNO. MD-627

HABS  
MD  
17-COLTON,  
6-

Addendum To:  
Melford  
(Thomas Duckett House)  
(Slingluff House)  
Crain Highway (U.S. Rt. 301)  
Bowie Vic.  
Prince George's County  
Maryland

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, DC 20013-7127

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HABS  
MD  
17-COLTO.V,  
6-

MELFORD  
(Thomas Duckett House, Slingluff House)

HABS NO. MD-627

Location: 5103 Crain Highway, Mitchellville, Prince George's County, Maryland

Present Owner: Carley Capital Group, 1640 Wisconsin Avenue, NW, Washington, D.C. 20007

Present Use: The house is occupied by a caretaker. Plans are to use it as a reception building for the Maryland Science and Technology Center currently being developed on the property.

Significance: Melford is an excellent example of the mid-nineteenth century side-hall-and-double-parlor-plan, brick plantation house. This house type was typical of the finer homes built by Prince Georges' wealthy planter and merchant class during the early- to mid-19th century (1820s to 1850s). This example incorporates Greek Revival and Federal details, with a bowed bay at the side elevation--an unusual variation on this familiar architectural theme. Melford is also of interest as the home of two prominent local families, the Ducketts and the Hardistys.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: The house is believed to have been built in the late 1840s. It is known, through assessment records, that there was an earlier, wood-frame house on this property which was replaced by the current residence. A substantial increase in the property's tax assessment in the late 1840s suggests that the present house was built at that time. Further indication is the fact that the owner, Dr. Richard Duckett, changed the name of the plantation from "Howerton's Range" (the tract name) to "Melford" at the time of the increased assessment.

2. Original and subsequent owners:

1770s- Deeds BB #3:395 and FF #1:377  
1780s Thomas Duckett purchases parts of Howerton's Range, accumulating approximately 600 acres

- 1806 Will, Thomas Duckett  
To  
His three children in equal shares; two sons,  
Dr. Richard Duckett and Judge Allan Bowie  
Duckett, buy out their sister's interest and  
hold the property as tenants in common.
- 1809 Chancery #1529 (1810)  
Allan Bowie Duckett  
To  
Thomas Duckett, son  
His undivided half share of the plantation
- 1849 Death of Thomas Duckett
- 1854 Will WAJ #1:61, Estate File #293  
Richard Duckett  
To  
Richard Duckett (II), grandnephew
- 1864 Estate File #695, death of Richard Duckett
- 1869 Deed HB #4:655  
Trustee for the estate of Richard Duckett  
To  
Richard Hardisty
- 1908 Equity #3705, following the death of Richard  
Hardisty, property divided among his children  
and his widow, Margaret, who retained her  
dower portion including the house and  
principal outbuildings.
- 1922 Deed #217:101  
Heirs of Margaret Hardisty  
To  
Emma Florence Slingluff, daughter
- 1984 Last surviving child of Emma Hardisty  
Slingluff, Miss Margaret T. Slingluff, dies.
- 198? Deed #5823:876  
Heirs of Margaret T. Slingluff  
To  
Carley Capital Group  
Property currently undergoing development of  
the Maryland Science and Technology Center.

3. Original plans and construction: According to the Federal Direct Tax for 1798, Thomas Duckett's 600-acre plantation was improved by a square frame house with a separate kitchen, a 12' square meat house, 10' square milk house, 24' x 12' lumber house, 26' x 12' poultry house, 30' x 10' corn house and two slave quarters, 30' x 12' and 20' x 16'. The current house is believed to have been built in the late 1840s by Dr. Richard Duckett, based on a considerable increase in the tax assessment, and the construction details. It is believed that the house and wing were built contemporary to each other due to the matching interior trim, construction details, etc. Also, the 1854 real estate inventory following Richard Duckett's death gives a room-by-room inventory which describes the current floor plan.

4. Alterations and additions: Renovations were undertaken ca. 1950 by Emma Slingluff's son, Richard. They included the replacement of the Victorian porch which once ran the length of the facade and one side of the main block (a section along the side elevation remains), removal of the later Victorian marble mantels on the first floor (replaced by the upstairs mantels), and the conversion of the slave quarters into a farm office.

#### B. Historical Context:

Melford was constructed in the late 1840s in the side-hall-and-double-parlor plan popular among the wealthier class of planters and merchants in Prince George's County during this period. It was constructed during the prosperous years of tobacco production before the Civil War, which resulted in changes in the pattern of landholdings, breaking large plantations such as Melford into smaller farms. Thus, this elegantly appointed brick home with its terraced gardens reflects the wealth of tobacco prosperity during Prince Georges' heyday.

In the 1770s and 1780s, Thomas Duckett purchased parts of Howerton's Range, accumulating approximately 600 acres on which he constructed a frame house and numerous outbuildings. Thomas Duckett had a distinguished political career, serving first as county sheriff (1777-1779), as a judge and associate justice of the First District Court (1786-1802), and as a member of both houses of the Maryland legislature (Lower House, 1780-81 and Senate, 1801-1806). He died in 1806, leaving his

plantation, in equal shares, to his three children. His two sons, Dr. Richard Duckett and Judge Allan Bowie Duckett, bought out their sister's share, holding the property as tenants in common. It was Dr. Duckett who resided in their father's former home. In 1809, Allan Bowie Duckett died, leaving his share to his son, Thomas Duckett. Dr. Duckett continued to live here, and after the death of his nephew in 1849, he and his wife--who had no children of their own--raised his two grandnephews. Dr. Duckett continued to farm, while also practicing medicine locally with his partner from the neighboring plantation, Dr. Grafton Tyler.

It was Dr. Richard Duckett to whom the construction of the current residence was credited, in the late 1840s. It was at this time that a considerable increase appears in the assessed value of the improvements to the property. The name "Howerton's Range" was also changed to "Melford" at this time. Perhaps also, a larger house was needed in which to raise Dr. Duckett's two grandnephews and heirs to their father's share of the plantation. Interior trim and construction details also suggest a date in the late 1840s. Finally, a room-by-room inventory following the death of Dr. Duckett describes the current floor plan. Dr. Duckett died in 1854 at the age of 76, leaving his entire estate to his grandnephew and namesake, Richard Duckett II.

Richard Duckett II lived at Melford for the remaining ten years of his life. Debts incurred during the rough economic times of the Civil War forced the sale of his real estate after his death. Melford, on 216 acres, was then purchased in 1869 by Richard Hardisty.

Richard Hardisty was a merchant from the nearby village of Queen Anne. Later, when a post office was established in Collington, he became postmaster and he and his brother open a general store there. The business was later moved, in 1872, following the completion of the Popes Creek Line of the Baltimore and Potomac Railroad to Collington Station. Mr. Hardisty also bought up the rest of the former Duckett estate, eventually accumulating 686 acres. He passed away in 1908, at which time his property was divided among his wife and children. His wife Margaret, by dower rights, retained the house and outbuildings. After Margaret Hardisty's death in 1922, the heirs conveyed Melford to their sister, Emma Hardisty Slingluff. Emma Florence Hardisty had married Trueman

Slingluff in August of 1882. They and their heirs continued to live at Melford until 1984, when the last surviving child, Margaret T. Slingluff, died.

## PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

### A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The side-hall-and-double-parlor plan of Melford was common among Prince Georges' wealthier class during the early- to mid-19th century. The several examples of this type vary in materials, size and details. Melford--being sizable, of brick construction, and with refined detailing--is among the finer examples. Its detailing appears to be a mix of the Greek Revival and Federal styles, and its bowed bay is unique to this house. The basic structure is of simplified Greek Revival--side gabled with an entry porch only. The south side exhibits Federal styling with its semi-circular bay with smooth, finely jointed brick finish, and the tripartite window in an arch opening which appears in a parapet wall at the gable end.

2. Condition of fabric: Melford appears to be in good condition although the exterior brickwork shows signs of repair and patching in a number of places. Also, it appears that tie-rods were added to support the stone end wall of the wing, at both corners of the attic level.

### B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: The main block is a two-and-one-half-story, rectangular, three-bay-by-three-bay structure with a bowed bay at the west side. There is a basement under the main block only. Attached to the east side is a two-story, five-bay-long kitchen wing. The main block is approximately 30' x 44' and the kitchen wing, approximately 33' x 25'. The kitchen wing is lower than the main block (the ceiling height of each level being less), and the wing itself is stepped. As apparent from the fenestration, the portion of the wing closest to the house is on the same level while the actual kitchen is stepped down.

2. Foundations: The foundation is of rough-cut, irregularly coursed stone.

3. Walls: The walls of the main block are brick laid in common bond (5:1, with some variation). The south-side semi-circular bay is brick, also in a common bond (but 7:1). The brick in the gable ends of the main block varies in color from the main block. There is a stepped parapet wall at the gable end at the south side (only), above the cornice (probably added). Incorporated into this stepped gable are two interior end chimneys. The walls of the wing are of the same brick as the main block, laid in a common bond (5:1). The north end wall, however, with the exception of the gable end, is of rubble stone which rounds the corners to form quoining at the west and east elevations.

4. Structural system framing: The walls are of load-bearing brick construction. There is a stone wall at the south end of the wing, with tie-rods added for support.

5. Porches: At the main entrance to the house is a simple pedimented portico supported by paired chamfered posts, with balustrade and built-in benches to either side. It rests on a brick stoop with brick steps. Although this porch is in keeping with the style of the house, it is not original. A 1936 Historic American Buildings Survey photograph of the house shows a wrap-around Victorian-era porch (also not original) with a cut-out balustrade which ran the length of the facade and north side of the main block. The north section still has a porch, although it is not the Victorian style, cut-out balustrade porch which appears in the 1936 photograph. It has a plain, unornamented balustrade and is enclosed with screening.

At the rear entry there is a similar portico. This one, however, has a flat roof (no pediment) and is supported by chamfered posts at each corner.

6. Chimneys: The main block has two interior gable-end chimneys, both of which are contained within the stepped gable wall of the south side. They serve fireplaces in each of the twin parlors and the bedrooms above, and one in the southwest attic room.

There are two chimneys along the roof ridge of the wing. One is located to the center of the wing and serves the dining room and bedroom above. The other is an interior end chimney which serves the kitchen. All are simple in style with a single corbelled edge at the top.



7. Openings:

a. Doorways and doors: The front and rear entrances have the same doorway and door (except that the rear doorway is cut off by the landing of the stair above, and therefore has no transom lights). The doorway is a simple Greek Revival type. Over the west front door is a plain lintel over a full transom--six large lights across--with a stepped molding beneath. To either side of the door are four-light side lights with simple pilasters with a curved recession (which matches the interior moldings), with a wood panel underneath. There are eight-panel doors.

There are also two secondary entrances in the wing. One is located at the west front, at the crux of the wing and the main block, and enters into the dining room. The other is to the rear, the second bay in from the end, and enters into the kitchen. Both have transoms above.

b. Windows: The windows of the first and second stories of the main block are all large, six-over-six-light-sash with thin muntins and a plain narrow wood surround. They have flat-arched brick lintels and stone sills. The window over the rear entry is positioned between the second and third levels to light the stair hall. All these windows include louvered shutters, with simple, flat shutter stays. The window at the south side in the gable end is a tripartite window in a high arched opening (a 1936 HABS photograph shows this arch infilled with stucco, now gone). The center section of this window is eight-over-eight-light-sash with narrow, two-over-two-light-sash sections to either side. Between the window and the arch is a wide wooden lintel with fine dentils underneath. There are small basement windows under each of the windows in the main block. They are covered with fixed louvers.

The windows in the wing are smaller, with the first-story windows being nine-over-nine-light-sash, and the second-story windows, nine-over-six-light-sash. They have the same lintels and sills as the main block. The lintels are obscured by the cornice in the second story of the section of the

wing closest to the main block. There are two small casement windows in the gable end of the wing, one to either side of the chimney block.

8. Roof:

a. Shape, covering: Both the main block and the wing have low-pitched side-gabled roofs covered with raised-seam metal, with wooden snow guards along the edge of the roof.

b. Cornice, eaves: The cornice of the main block consists of a plain wood frieze board with crown molding. This cornice runs completely around the south side of the main block, including the bowed bay, cutting it off from the parapet wall at the gable end. The cornice in the wing consists of two rows of extended brick.

c. Dormers: There are two dormers at both the front and rear elevations of the main block. They are gable-roofed dormers with crown molding and a narrow boxed return. There is a shoulder at the base of the surround. The windows are round-arched, six-over-six-light-sash.

C. Description of the Interior:

1. Floor plans:

a. Cellar: There is a cellar under the main block only. It is entered from underneath the main stairway. There is a stairhall and two rooms, one under each of the two parlors. The front room is used as a utility room and the rear room was finished as a recreation room, with brick veneer walls, in the 1950s.

b. First floor: The main block has a side-hall-and-double-parlor plan. The stairhall runs from front to rear with a rear garden entry. The stairway is located along the north wall, and runs up to the third floor. To the south are double parlors, each with their own entry from the stairhall, and joined by large folding doors. In the southwest corner of rear parlor is the doorway into the closet formed by the bowed bay. The wing is entered from the rear of the stairhall, behind

the stair. Here, a back stairhall runs perpendicular to the main stairhall, with the stair along the west wall. To the immediate west is the entry into the dining room. Along the east wall is a former exterior door which now opens into a bathroom addition. At the end of the hall is a doorway--a few steps down--into the kitchen. A doorway adjoins the kitchen with the small sitting room (former pantry?) in front, which, in turn, adjoins the dining room.

b. Second Floor: The second floor follows the same configuration as the first with a large bedroom over each of the parlors, entered off the stairhall. To the front, over the main entry, is a small room. The second floor of the wing--because it is at a lower level than the main block--is entered from the landing of the main stair onto the landing of the back stair, and (up two steps) into the back stair hall. There are two adjoining bedrooms in the front. At the end of the hall, over the kitchen, is a large bathroom. In the southwest corner of the bathroom is a boxed stair into the attic of the wing.

c. Third floor: The main stairway rises all the way up to the third floor. To the south of the stair, over the bedrooms, are two finished dormered rooms. The room to the west front of the house has a small fireplace. The east room is lit by the tripart window in the stepped gable end (except for the two over two light end which appears in the front room). The third floor (attic) of the wing is on two levels. The stair enters into the far, northern end. At the northeast corner are a few steps up to a doorway behind which is a low ceiling, finished space.

2. Stairways: The main stairway is an open-well, open-string, two-flight stair which rises up to the third floor. It runs along the north wall to a landing, where there is a doorway, to the north, into the wing. The main stairway continues along the south wall to the second floor. Both the main and the back stair have the same balustrade and newel, the back stair being somewhat simplified and executed in a different wood (the balustrade of the main stair is tiger maple). It has a heavy, rounded, tapering newel post with a delicate hand

rail that is joined with the mitered cap of the newel, and plain but delicately tapering balusters. The main stairway has bracketed (wave pattern) step ends, and there are paneled walls beneath. The back stair runs, in a single flight, to a landing, then turns and continues up two steps. It is an open-well, open-string stair, but is without the brackets and paneled wall of the main stairway. The stairway into the attic of the wing is a steep, narrow, partially-boxed, single-run stair, with a plain wooden rail around the well at the top of the stairs.

3. Flooring: There are hardwood floors throughout.

4. Wall and ceiling finish: Melford has plastered walls throughout. There is a decorative plaster ceiling medallion in the stairhall, consisting of concentric rings. There is also cornice molding in the stairhall and parlors of the main block.

5. Openings:

a. Doorways and doors: The doorways in the first floor of the main block have a wide trim consisting of a low, V-shape panel in the center flanked by a squared groove and edged with a fillet, with bull's-eye corner blocks. The doorways in the second floor are simpler--lacking the V-shaped panel--consisting of three narrow bands separated by grooves, with plain corner blocks. The third floor has plain surrounds with plain corner blocks. The molding in the wing is a simplified version of the molding found in the second story of the main block, with only one squared recession. The doors are mostly six-panel, cross-and-open-bible. Adjoining the two parlors are large, floor-to-ceiling, ten-panel double doors which fold into the back parlor.

b. Windows: The window frames match the doorways. There are recessed rectangular wooden panels under the windows in the parlors, and added jig-sawn valances over the windows in the front parlor only.

6. Decorative features, trim: The baseboards of the main block consist of a wide band topped with a fillet and ovolo molding. The baseboards in the wing are the same, but without the ovolo.

7. Hardware: The doors of the main block have old silvered knobs, and there are porcelain knobs in the wing. There are some old box locks (marked "Carpenter & Co. Patentees"). In the window frame of the wing are notched wooden stays to hold the sash open.

8. Mechanical equipment:

a. Heating, ventilation: In the main stairhall are two circular registers cut out in a spiral pattern.

b. Plumbing: There is a large raised-seam metal cistern in the attic of the wing marked "Challenge II....?...No. 12".

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: The house sits atop a knoll, facing west, with a terraced garden to the east rear. It is currently located at the end of a long cedar-lined dirt drive--off Rt. 301--which forms a circle at the end of the drive in front of the house. The rear faces the Patuxent River, a half mile away (though there is no view of it). Currently, construction is now underway, to the front of the house.

2. Historic landscape design: To the rear of the house is a large, terraced boxwood garden. There are three levels of terracing. The first terrace is very slight. The next is steep, with brick steps onto an area enclosed with ancient boxwoods. The next terrace is also steep, with steps down to it. It then levels out to the fence line. This area is also terraced from the sides, enclosing the middle section. There are also a number of boxwood and other shrubs to the front of the house, as well as large old trees.

3. Outbuildings: There are three outbuildings, just to the northeast of the house. The largest is a frame, single-story, three-bay-wide gable-roofed building reported to have been a slave quarter, since converted into a farm office. Just southeast of this is a pyramidal-roofed frame smoke house. To the rear of both is a small pyramidal-roofed pump house. Farther to the northeast is a large twentieth-century dairy barn, and to the southeast, a twentieth-century tobacco barn (in poor condition).

### PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Early views: Two views were taken of Melford on April 27, 1936 by John Brostrup, HABS photographer. One is taken from the northwest of the main block and wing, and the other from the southwest of the south side of the main block which also captures the front facade. The only pronounced difference is the Victorian porch which then ran the length of the facade and side of the main block.

#### B. Bibliography:

Pearl, Susan (Prince George's County Historic Preservation Commission). Maryland Historical Trust State Historic Site Inventory Form, Melford, prepared June 1986.

Prince Georges County Land Records, County Courthouse, deeds and equity proceedings as cited in text.

### PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

Documentation of Melford was undertaken as part of a cooperative project between the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) and the Maryland National Capital Park and Planning Commission on behalf of the Prince George's County Historic Preservation Commission (HPC). A memorandum of agreement was signed in August of 1988 and the project, to span one year, was begun in January of 1989. Gail Rothrock, director and Susan G. Pearl, research historian (HPC) made the selection of sites. They also provided access to their historical research and information on file with the HPC, as well as their extensive knowledge of county history. The large format photography was undertaken by HABS photographer Jack E. Boucher. The historical report was prepared by HABS historian Catherine C. Lavoie, who also accompanied the photographer into the field for on site investigations.

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